CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A photocopier configured to host at least one external output device, the photocopier comprising:

an integrated imaging device configured to provide a first signal corresponding to an image;

an integrated output device;

at least one output port; and

an image data switching unit configured to selectively switch a second signal corresponding to the image between the integrated output device and the at least one output port.

2. The photocopier of claim 1, wherein the integrated imaging device comprises a scanner configured to obtain the image by optically scanning an object.

3. The photocopier of claim 1, wherein each at least one output port is configured to electrically couple to the at least one external output device.

4. The photocopier of claim 1, wherein the integrated output device and the at least one external output device are each selected from a group comprising a copier output system, a laser printer, an inkjet printer and a dot matrix printer.

5. The photocopier of claim 1, further comprising a user interface configured to select at least one output characteristic.

6. The photocopier of claim 1, further comprising a controller electrically coupled to the integrated imaging device, the integrated output device and the image data switching unit, wherein the controller is configured to convert the first signal to the second signal and to selectively switch the image data switching unit.

7. The photocopier of claim 6, wherein the controller comprises a processor and a memory device.

8. The photocopier of claim 6, wherein the controller is further configured to:
electrically couple to a peripheral device;
selectively transmit the first signal and the second signal to the peripheral device; and
selectively receive the first signal and the second signal from the peripheral device.

9. A method for copying a document using an image processing system including an integrated imaging device, an integrated output device and at least one external output device, the method comprising:
determining an output path based upon at least one output characteristic;
producing a first signal corresponding to an image of the document;
converting the first signal to a second signal; and
directing the second signal to the output path.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein determining the output path comprises:
selecting the at least one output characteristic; and
comparing the at least one output characteristic to the functionality of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising defining the output path to include at least one of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device such that the output path provides the at least one output characteristic.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising configuring the integrated imaging device and the at least one of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device included in the output path to provide the at least one output characteristic.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein selecting the at least one output characteristic comprises specifying a characteristic selected from the group comprising copying speed, output media size, output media weight, output media color, output media material, output font, output color, output color resolution, copying resolution, and printing resolution.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein producing the first signal comprises:
optically scanning the document with the integrated imaging device to produce an image of the document; and
converting the image to a digital signal.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein converting the first signal to the second signal comprises processing the first signal using printer driver software compatible with at least one of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device.

16. The method of claim 9, wherein directing the second signal to the output path comprises routing the second signal to at least one of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising printing a portion of the second signal with the at least one of the integrated output device and the at least one external output device.

18. The method of claim 9, wherein directing the second signal to the output path comprises routing the second signal to a peripheral device.

19. An image processing system comprising:

a host device comprising:

an output port;

a first means for printing; and

a switching means for selectively passing image data to the output port and the first means for printing; and

a second means for printing, wherein the second means for printing is electrically attachable to the output port of the host device.

20. The image processing system of claim 19, wherein the host device further comprises an imaging means for providing a first electrical signal, wherein the first electrical signal is representative of an image.

21. The image processing system of claim 20, wherein the host device further comprises a processing means for converting the first electrical signal into a second electrical signal configured to be processed by at least one of the first means for printing and the second means for printing.

22. The image processing system of claim 19, wherein the host device further comprises an interface means for entering parameters used to control the switching means.

23. The image processing system of claim 19, further comprising a peripheral means for transferring image data to and from the host device.

24. Computer readable media including computer executable instructions for performing:

selecting at least one output characteristic for a copy job;

comparing the functionality of a plurality of output paths to the selected at least one output characteristic; and

directing at least a portion of the copy job output to an external output device.

25. The computer readable media of claim 24, wherein selecting the at least one output characteristic comprises specifying a characteristic selected from a group comprising copying speed, output media size, output media weight, output media color, output media material, output font, output color resolution, optical resolution, and printing resolution.